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Study of the Teachers' Option of Primary and Preschool Education in Romania to Use Learning Situations for Training Pupils' Skills

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Abstract. This study highlights the results of an empirical research, whose purpose was to study the teachers' option of primary and preschool education to use learning situations for training pupils' skills in relation to seniority in teaching and learning environment and to identify of the level of conceptual representation of the learning situations term in the opinion of teachers in primary and preschool education. We made a questionnaire in order to identify the frequency teachers can organize learning situations and the teachers' conceptual representations of learning situation. The results have confirmed the conclusions to get teachers' adhesion to organize learning situations for pupils' skills training, to develop teachers' skills in harmonizing all the methods, means and teaching strategies with the objective and subjective factors determining the interaction between teachers and pupils.

Introduction

By analyzing the characteristics of the educational system and what they wish to promote through teaching focused on intelligence, we can only prioritize the development skills of teachers in primary and preschool education, to design and organize learning situations as a result of a desirable situation and an appropriate approach of the term learning situation.

This present study shows, on a theoretical plan, the formative characteristic implications of the educational process, the manifestations of the interaction subject-situating conditions by conceptual boundaries of action and education activities, interventions and educational influence, pedagogical situation and learning situation, as presented in the literature of specialty.

The Implications of the Formative Characteristics of the Instructive-Educational Process.

The importance of the formative characteristics of the instructive-educational process is determined by the following pedagogical concepts about education: „Education represents the action of the adult generation over the young ones in order to shape some particular physical, intellectual and mental states, necessary to the social life and to the particular environment they are designed to” [1].

Formative education refers to a pupil's personality transformation, in determining or facilitating new character traits, of decision making behavior.

Forming the individual as an autonomous personality is achieved by education, which has taken place in early birth years based on factors in the family environment, which were later exercised in the instructive- educational process.

If traditional education emphasized the transmission of knowledge, training skills and habits, the cultivation of attitudes and intellectual capacities today “the hierarchical triad is to be reversed, placing the demand of attitude formation and spiritual capacities first, followed by the formation of skills and abilities ending with the passing of knowledge” [2].

In a formative dimension, the instructive-educational process favors intellectual and spiritual autonomy by taking advantage of the methodology and learning contents, involving pupils in self-training, acknowledging them of valences required by society.

The school must teach the pupil how to formatively adapt himself to the requirements of society. Thus, I. Radu notices that the current society requires human value determined by formative aspect of the creative ability, the spirit of investigation, whereas the school must teach him how to feel the need to constantly learn [3].

The specific formative educational process allows everyone to be educated according to their possibilities and needs, „the educational process being more effective in reaching its purposes” [4].

Manifestations of the interaction subject-situation conditions.

The educational relations, says C. Bunăiașu, „ represent the types of interactions that shape the personal dimension of the instructive-educational process and highlight the attitudes of teachers and pupils in specific educational contexts statements” [5].

The fundamental theory implications for capturing an organizing educational situation are of uttermost importance: „a successful educational activity depends largely on intentions, activities, circumstances and interacting factors.” [6].

We shall analyze the comparative terms „action” and „activity” delimitating them, to remove common understanding confusions. We will also study the comparative notion of educational and personal action, highlighting both the differences, distinct notes, and especially the partial overlap of meaning which often generates confusion.

Activity and action.

The concepts of „action” and „activity” often overlap in pedagogical literature thus the attempts to classify the meaning of each term become very difficult to be exemplified.

The notion of „action” was defined in several ways:

- Extensive definitions: “In the broadest sense, we can define the action as a product or phenomena on where a force produces an effect. The language itself, the thinking itself represents actions, because they organize our conscious movement before it is presented to us in reality” [7].
- Comprehensive definitions: “Human action is an event or a change in environment triggered by the intervention of an agent which can give value and social-human meaning to some objectives or natural processes” [4], or “acting means intentionally producing or preventing, willfully making a change in the world, in the nature” [9].

Production of the expected changes depends not only on the motive that leads to the construction of action, but rather, by modifying the action of situational factors, which revolves around pupils involved in the action.

Any act and any abstention are considered actions. Compared to documents that bind the events, activities relate to processes. The acts lead to events producing while the activities cause the processes to open up.

Educational intervention - a form of effective educational action.

Efficiency of operation, achieving superior performance levels, depends on solving chained progressive action in specific contexts. Thus, the formative intervention results in achieving transformation in pupil behavior through actions, situations, relationships, processes, which occupies a central place.

We can find the need of a positive interventions, timely, rational, balanced:

“The educational intervention represents all the influences on the pupil, through actions and situations, organized, conducted, created and exploited within varied relationships through communication, coordination through specific ways and in well-defined direction” [10].

A central place among all these elements it has the situation of (teaching, learning, assessing) created, organized to give pupils all the necessary conditions for learning, training.

Educational intervention is identified as the imperative of educational teaching practice. Educational intervention is the one that faithfully predicts the adjacent results to those proposed.

If educational intervention becomes a mediator between subject and object, educational influences is a direct intervention of a teacher over the pupil. These differences, defining boundaries of educational intervention and influence, are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary in an organized educational situation.

The situation of teacher training mediates and influences the express favoring purpose of affecting action, allowing for the affirmation of roles and promoting methods and the educational intervention strategies.

Educational intervention leads pupils to think, choose, compare, analyze following „an education in regards the individual's freedom of thought and their autonomy in acquiring spiritual perspective" [2].

The conscious participation involves the awakening of a will to know, amplifying, continuously feeding this appetite. We must not encourage learning by rote, mechanical assimilation of information, instead the emphasis should be on understanding the knowledge, before it being reproduced.

“As a teacher you should induce aspiration to search and sometimes to cause astonishment, which should engage pupils in a permanent state of spiritual activism” [2], involving them in educational situations where you have to practice those behaviors by objectives.

Powered Effectiveness Learning Situations in Pupil-Centered Education. The Delimitation of Concepts „Pedagogical Situation" and „Learning Situation".

In general, the educational situation takes the shape of a pyramid of educational situations, but what distinguishes a situation from another is that „An educational situation is unique and unrepeatable, individually manifested in certain spatial-temporal conditions and by linking specific elements (factors, relationships, educational influences)" [11].

Psychology suggests: learning situations (situations of concern), therapeutic situations (Rogers), circumstances of life (Neveanu) - representing specific existential sequences in which the internal, subjective relation to the external conditions are dominated by the subjective.

In the field of teaching, “A tinted view regarding the purpose and genetic structures of quality in education (teaching situations), institutionalized environment (school situation) or the act of directed, controlled teaching is limited by instructional time situations” [11].

Referring to teaching situations, the teacher does not focus only on transmitting information, on contents. The training and learning are integrated to teaching.

“Participation is fundamental for learning. In the case of learning, participation is based on pupil's desire of learning, of self-involvement in tasks through focusing his attention, effort and interest on assimilating knowledge and abilities” [11].

Situations of training and learning develop pupils' independence attracting them into the act of self-formation, they put the pupils in relation to independent, differentiated and individual work.

In the research project, we proposed the following objectives:

1. To study teachers' option in primary and preschool education to use learning situations for training pupils' skills in relation to seniority in the teaching and learning environment.
2. To identify the level of conceptual representation of the term learning situation in the opinion of teachers in primary and preschool education.

We have identified as general hypothesis of the research project:

If the learning situation is perceived by teachers in primary and preschool education as a unit of conceptual issues, then the following benefic effects can be registered: getting teachers' adhesion to organize learning situations for pupils' skills training; development and consolidation of concepts and skills of teachers to harmonize all the methods, means and teaching strategies with subjective and objective factors determining the interaction between teacher and pupils.

From this general hypothesis derive following specific hypothesis:

1. If there is studied the frequency that teachers can organize learning situations for pupils' skills training (applying the first items of the questionnaire), then it is obtained their adhesion to the proposed model.

2. If the teachers in primary and preschool education intercept the learning situation as an ensemble of conceptual units, then they will properly correlate the didactic methods, means and proceedings in order to determine the teacher's influence on the pupil in order to form the educational skills.

For operationalization we have used the following variables:

a) For the first hypothesis we analyzed as variable the study of the frequency that teachers can organize learning situations;

b) For the second hypothesis we studied the level of conceptual representation of the learning situation in primary and preschool education teachers' opinion.

Methodology

Sample

The sampling of the research was exploratory and includes 20 teachers in primary and preschool education, 10 of urban environment and 10 of rural environment.

Methods

We used as research method, the survey method based on the questionnaire.

The method of investigation based on questionnaire presents the way in which the learning situations at pre-university level are performed, either in urban or rural environment, but also the involved teachers' representations about the concept of learning situation.

The questionnaire's objectives aimed at establishing the degree of applicability of different ways of organizing the situations of learning, the study of the target groups' perceptions on the concept of learning situation.

Tools

Questioning teachers includes items, which requires the respondent to appreciate from 1-3 how much do they organize learning situations for pupils' competence formation, the second item studies the level of conceptual representation of learning situation, and other items of identification referring to the environment they work in, their length of service in the educational system.

The statistics methods for interpreting the information are the histogram and the techniques (the analysis of frequency, the colligation) used in the IBM SPSS program, version 21.

Results

Starting from teachers' knowledge, skills and abilities of organizing situation of formative learning within the lesson, we tried to study their opinions on confirming or invalidating the stated hypotheses. For the first item, 55% of teachers ensured that it is necessary to they organized learning situations very frequently, 40% frequently and 5% sometimes.

For the second item, 80% of the respondents defined the concept of learning situation, out of which 62.5% elaborated scientific definitions and 37.5% offered empiric definitions.

The learning situation is mistaken with the pedagogical situation by 32% of the respondents who defined the learning situation; for 20% of the respondents, the learning situation represents an educational influence of the teacher on the pupils. So, these respondents grant more time from their lesson to teaching situation, substituting the teaching situation to learning situation.

For 8% the learning situation represents the pupil's action challenged by the teacher in order to reach the established objectives.

For 40% the learning situation represents an activity that supposes the teacher sending new information to the pupil. In these respondents' opinion, the learning situation is substituted to the teaching situation.

A percentage of 33.4% of the respondents defined the learning situation as being synonym with the teaching situation: 20% of respondents the learning situation is mistakenly taken as the activity of learning; 13.4% of the respondents, the learning situation is perceived as a multitude of

contextual aspects, involving the subjective and objective factors which determine an interaction between the subject and the object of learning.

The learning situation is understood by 33.4% of the respondents as a form of organization of the didactic activity: the learning situation is the lesson in which the pupil assimilates new knowledge.

Discussion

The scores recorded by respondents in the experimental sample (55% of teachers ensured that it is necessary to they organized learning situations very frequently, 40% frequently and 5% sometimes) are relevant for us to be able to come to the conclusion that there has been obtained their adhesion of using learning situations for pupils' skills training.

A higher percentage (62.5%) of the respondents elaborated scientific definitions of learning situations only that, they made some confusion in explaining and approaching it.

Thus, to exemplify, we shall quote the following definitions:

- The learning situation represents the interaction between the elements of training-educational process;
- The learning situation represents the influence the teacher has on his pupil, and this influence leads to a modified profile of the pupil's personality;
- The learning situation represents a pupil's action challenged by the teacher in order to reach some objectives;
- The learning situation represents the teacher's activity of transmitting new knowledge to the pupil.

The respondents who defined the learning situation mistaking (32%) it with the pedagogical situation. The substitution is the result of an educational practice centered on giving top priority to content according to which they choose the objectives. Such approach does not form and does not develop competence, because the pupil is not involved. The didactic strategy must be adapted to competence not to content.

The learning situation must not be mistaken with the pedagogical situation, which is performed through the interaction of the elements of the learning educational process, representing the interaction between teaching-learning-evaluating situations.

The learning situation represents an educational influence of the teacher on the pupils for 20% of the respondents. In this case, the teacher's role is no more that of a mediator of forming and developing knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes to pupils, but the one who sends information, influencing the assimilation of some knowledge.

The learning situation can be noting but beneficial for the success of the educational intervention for 8%, because the learning situation is seen as an action performed by the pupil but challenged by the teacher for certain purposes.

The learning situation must not be focused only on the pupil's action, it should be centered on the pupil, centered on the individual particularities in reaching the given objective.

The respondents, 40%, are the ones who prefer an informative education, when the teacher sends knowledge and the pupils assimilated it without knowing how to use it. They know certain notions, concepts or information but they do not have the capacity of using them- as they memorize them without involving their logical, creative, divergent thinking.

Similarly, to those who elaborated scientific definitions, 33,4% of the respondents consider that the learning situation is the action through which the teacher sends some certain knowledge.

The respondents from this category described the learning situation this way:

- The learning situation refers to sending the information by the teacher to the pupils;
- The learning situation is the teacher's action of informing the pupils about the new content of learning.

For 20% of respondents the learning situation is mistakenly taken as the activity of learning. In order to clear up this situation we shall give some definitions:

- The learning situation is the activity that helps pupil to get new knowledge and skills;
- The learning situation is the activity that helps pupils to get new abilities.

The relationship between the learning situation and the pupils' activity is very important, but for its efficiency, for reaching the established objectives, it is necessary to report the learning situation to the multitude of contextual aspects, to the subjective and objective factors involved in their unfolding.

The respondent (13.4%) consider that the learning situation represent the ensemble of didactic methods, means and strategies practiced in order to make the pupils able to act on the given content so that he can reach the established objectives.

This approach and way of understanding the learning situation becomes efficient for achieving the established objectives. Therefore, from this point of view, the conception and the unfolding of the learning situation is performed taking into account the interaction of internal and external factors, through reporting the subject to these factors. The teachers adapt the educational influences and interventions involved in the learning situation to the subjects' particularities whose development they continually follow.

The conceptual – linguistic ambiguities mistakenly take the teaching situation to the learning activity, to the form of organizing of the didactic activity-they become essential reference points which characterize the level of knowledge by the teachers of the notion of learning situation.

Conclusions

The undertaken research study has obtained the adherence of teachers to organize learning situations focused on pupils' skills training, to develop their concept and skills to harmonize the ensemble of teaching strategies with the subjective and objective factors causing the effective interaction between teachers and pupils.

The paper presents some personal contributions:

- The scientific argumentation of the distinctions between the educational action and activity, the educational intervention and influence, the teaching situation and learning situation, but also the presentation, the statistical and qualitative analysis of the representation of teachers in primary and preschool education about learning situation as a result of their answers to the applied questionnaire;
- Bringing into question the concept of learning situation based on competence, less studied in the literature of specialty.

As future possible problems for the future surveys we suggest the development of the concept of learning situation through relating it to the teaching and evaluating situation; the establishment of some conformities between these; the offer of some support to the teachers in order to project and apply the learning situations by selecting the formative didactic strategies, writing a methodological guide; the development of teachers' competences in order to conceive and organize the learning situation adapted to each pupil, individually.

The study presents the limits of the research determined by the following factors:

- The reticence of some teachers in responding to the questions, which was remedied in time, when they understood that we were not interested in appreciating their own competences.
- The questions with an open-answer from the questionnaire did not allow us to process statistically the information, but using certain techniques (the analysis of frequency, setting the average) we could obtain results that represent meaningful criteria of a relevant research.

Many theories and educational paradigms are concerned in scientifically argumentation of formative education and not on informative one, omitting the practical purpose of the more frequently mentioned theories: guiding teachers using proper instruments that support the formative organization of efficient learning situation.

Taking into account all our research, the scientific definitions as well as the practical ones prove that many teachers have deficiencies in defining, but also in applying some learning situations.

The weak scientific information implies inadequate practices of the learning situation and thus, the failure to produce efficient purposes.

In a synthetic approach we can identify the objectives of the formative dimension: realizing a rollover of traditional objectives: knowledge-skills-separation, attitudes and intellectual capacity-attitudes and spiritual ability; skills and habits-knowledge; highlighting the forefront of the qualitative aspect of training cognitive processes in order to solve different situations; formulation, specification, operationalization of educational objectives corresponding to the cognitive functions, simple knowledge capacities, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation; continuous learning, training, formative versatility; changing attitudes towards the informative by: a decrease of volume, eliminating the details of knowledge, embodying the operational and applicative values; training for active learning changes the current state of teaching, promoting independent intellectual work styles by strengthening permanent motivation; ordering next intellectual intercedes taken by a graduate involved in future social work.

Achieving the objectives of formative dimensions mentioned above, can be also determined by: selecting priority competences, of objectives and not of contents, performing various operations-tasks of information, use of modern, complementary learning methods, choosing different strategies for organizing the pupils' activities, designing and conducting the learning situations, presentations of pupils' targets at the beginning of the activities, adapting techniques and ways of learning, new forms of assessment to the pupils' interests and psychological evolution.

Romanian education still struggles with the adaptation to changes caused by modern pedagogy.

By promoting the principle of decentralization, selecting qualitative over quantitative contents, in co-relation to objectives and, more recently, to competence, the educational process takes the characteristic shape of formative education, increasingly being focused more and more on the pupil.

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